aircraft or whenever these become operationally unsustainable due to various reasons.

Mandatory HIV test for JCOs and other ranks

776. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the defence headquarters proposes to make HIV test mandatory for those who want to become Junior Commissioned Officers and other ranks in the army;

(b) if so, when it is likely to be implemented; and

(c) whether all army centers are equipped with HIV testing facilities?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) A proposal to make Human Immuno deficiency Virus (HIV) test mandatory for new entrants into the Army is under consideration.

(b) No specific time-frame can be indicated.

(c) All the Army Hospitals are equipped with HIV testing facilities.

Increase in Aids cases amongst Indian soldiers

†777. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is an increase in the cases of AIDS amongst Indian soldiers;

(b) if so, the number of soldiers who died of AIDS during the last two years and the number of soldiers infected with the said disease at present;

(c) whether any action plan has been made by the Government to make soldiers aware in this regard so that they can remain safe against this disease; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d) There is no increase in Human Immuno deficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) cases amongst the Indian soldiers. Government has made in action plan to make the soldiers and their families aware about HIV/AIDS. Some of the activities undertaken in this regard are as under:—

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(i) Health education of the troops and their families.

(ii) Surveillance of High Risk Groups such as blood donors, patients of sexually transmitted diseases, tuberculosis patients, ante natal cases, personnel proceeding abroad in peace keeping missions and returning from there.

(iii) Hundred percent screening of all ante natal cases.

(iv) Hundred percent screening of all blood/blood products for HIV, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, Syphilis and Malaria.

(v) Encouraging voluntary counseling and testing.

(vi) Spreading awareness about HIV/AIDS through audio-visual means.

Suspension/court martial of senior officers

†778. SHRI MOTILAL VORA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of senior officers of Defence Forces suspended/court martialled during the last two years;

(b) the reasons for suspending/court martialling these officers;

(c) whether Government have tried to ascertain the reasons for indiscipline in senior officers; and

(d) the efforts being made by the Government to inculcate character-building in senior officers?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) During the last two years, 3 senior officers (of the rank of Brigadier equivalent or above) of the Defence Forces, were court martialled and one officer was suspended.

(b) The said officers were court martialled for offences committed under relevant sections of the Army and Navy Acts. One officer was suspended as serious acts of omission and commission had come to the notice of competent authority.

(c) The number of cases of indiscipline are very small and are not indicative of any trend.

(d) Promotions to higher ranks are based on merit based selection wherein character qualities are given importance. The officers also undergo professional courses wherein character building traits are emphasized.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.